

**KENT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

*Tuesday, June 21, 2016*

*Room 310, Administration Building*

***Dispatch Surcharge***

***- WORK SESSION -***

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Meeting called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chair James R. Saalfeld.

**Present:** Commissioners Antor, Bolter, Brieve, Bulkowski, Chivis, Hennessy, Jones, Kallman, Koorndyk, Mast, Morgan, Ponstein, Shroll, Stek, Talen, Vander Molen, Voorhees, Chair Saalfeld - 18.

**Absent:** Vonk - 1.

(Handouts include: Questions and Answers (as a result of the June 9 Work Session), Pro Forma Projected Budgets with \$1.15 Proposed Dispatch Surcharge.

**PRESENTATION**

Chair Saalfeld explained that this is the second work session on a 911 dispatch surcharge. Administrator Delabbio provided a brief summary of the June 9 Work Session. That session covered the current emergency dispatch system, its financial situation, and the Millage Subcommittee's recommendations for future funding – a request to put a proposal on the November ballot asking for an increase in the 911 surcharge of \$0.70 (currently \$0.45 for a total of \$1.15). Commissioners were asked to submit additional questions and the answers were distributed to Commissioners last week. The intent of today's work session is to answer any further questions.

**Q & A**

**Com. Stek:** Concerned with verification of collections from the telecommunication companies. Can we develop requirements for these companies?

**Atty Dempsey:** Several counties have amended their 911 service plans and adopted local ordinances requiring the telecommunications companies to report, but he is not sure how successful they have been.

**Com. Stek:** Verification from telecommunication companies is high on Kent County's legislative agenda, but it is not on the legislators' agenda.

**Atty Dempsey:** Saginaw County is the furthest down that road but have not heard if a law suit was filed.

**Chair Saalfeld:** We have been doing some checking behind the scenes. One provider indicated to Commissioner Jones some willingness to provide information, which we want to explore. It might be a good idea to contact Saginaw County and see where things stand there. We could take the lead in talking with other counties and try to spur action in Lansing.

**Com. Antor:** Does the FCC have any role in regulating the surcharge collections?

**Atty Dempsey:** No. This is a state issue and 911 varies from state to state.

**Chair Saalfeld:** Telecommunication companies collect the fee and send it to the County. The question is if we are getting it all and what can be done to change this uncertainty? There is no indication of being shorted in the past.

**Com. Mast:** Can the County get involved in advocating this millage? Is there a group stepping forward to do this?

**Administrator Delabbio:** No, we cannot advocate, only educate. The same with the Kent County Dispatch Authority (KCDA). The County can, though, provide factual information.

**Com. Mast:** Could the township fire chiefs take the lead in promoting this millage proposal?

**Administrator Delabbio:** They cannot use public funds.

**Chair Saalfeld:** The County is meeting with cities and townships to answer questions.

**Com. Bulkowski:** With regard to the projected budgets, will enough revenue be raised to cover costs? Why is the KCDA giving away more dollars than it has?

**Sheriff Administrator DeBruine:** By 2036, the KCDA is looking at a \$1,800,000 deficit. The surcharge will not address everything. It will help with capital equipment and fire dispatch.

**Undersheriff Young:** The surcharge request fills two gaps: 1) initial radio purchase; and 2) fire dispatch. It will not take care of call taking and police dispatch costs which will need to be dealt with in the future.

**Chair Saalfeld:** There are three components to dispatch: 1) capital equipment, 2) fire dispatch, and 3) police operations. The surcharge request will address fire dispatch and equipment, and police dispatch will be addressed in the future.

**Com. Bulkowski:** Does that mean that in four or five years the County will need to ask for another surcharge increase?

**Com. Hennessy:** With regard to voter approval of a surcharge in other counties, do we have information on how many counties said "no" the first time around?

**Administrator Delabbio:** No, but we know that some counties (Ionia, Eaton, Jackson) went back and asked voters for more successfully.

**Com. Voorhees:** If the question is placed on the November ballot and passes, when does the County start collecting monies?

**Atty Dempsey:** July 1, 2017.

**Com. Vander Molen:** Is it not counterproductive to, at a future date, ask for more? He would be more inclined to support asking for what is needed the first time. Is there a good reason to do this besides this is what we think is appropriate for right now?

**Chair Saalfeld:** It has been explored and this was believed to have the greatest success; to allow this issue to be explained in the simplest terms. We have gone through variations and might not have to revisit this. A lot of questions need to be answered. Equipment is critical before the other elements are explored.

**Com. Talen:** (Question 19) In trying to understand the 50 percent of revenue that goes to the City of Grand Rapids, it is stated "*provide for technology upgrades (one project, inclusive of the City of Grand Rapids).*" Is there one system on the technology side with two separate dispatch centers using the same technology?

**Undersheriff Young:** Generally speaking, yes, that is the case for all of the technology that is in place for dispatch - to include CAD, phone system, and radio console system. That answer refers to the 800 MHz radio project which is a one-system implementation shared by all public safety users in the community including the City of Grand Rapids.

**Com. Talen:** Can we assume that somehow paying for that will be prorated to the City's portion of the revenue that is generated by the surcharge?

**Undersheriff Young:** The revenue generated by the surcharge would first pay for the technology and then be distributed 50/50 for fire dispatch costs.

**Com. Talen:** (Question 20) *What happens if the surcharge is not approved?* Answer – County will have to continue subsidizing paying for dispatch. Will the County not have to pay for dispatch if this is approved?

**Administrator Delabbio:** Should the millage pass, then the County will not pay for fire dispatch (the County pays 40% now). However, the County will always be responsible for Sheriff dispatch (all townships and one city).

**Com. Jones:** Do other counties charge per line, per phone?

**Administrator Delabbio:** Yes.

**Com. Jones:** Can the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) help with discussions and collecting other county information on surcharges?

**Atty Dempsey:** The telecommunication companies do not break down information (number of customers and names).

**Chair Saalfeld:** Considerable time has been spent trying to do a comparison. The only true way to properly evaluate where Kent County stands compared to other counties is to do a cost per capita comparison. Otherwise, it is just too difficult because of missing data and some counties have internal PSAPs (University of Michigan has its own).

**Com. Bolter:** When does the township fire dispatch agreement end?

**Administrator Delabbio:** December 31, 2017.

**Com. Bolter:** It has been mentioned that the County will save money if the equipment is purchased this year. How much would the County save versus waiting?

**Undersheriff Young:** If equipment is purchased this year, Motorola will give an additional \$6,000,000 discount on the cost.

**Com. Bolter:** Will the Alto area service issues be addressed with the equipment purchase?

**Undersheriff Young:** Yes. We will have to acquire and lease a tower in Alto. It is on the list and has been budgeted for.

**Com. Bolter:** How is the current surcharge of \$0.45 and \$0.19 distributed and how will the new surcharge effect this?

**Undersheriff Young:** The \$0.45 and \$0.19 goes to the KCDA to pay 911 call taking first and the balance is used for equipment support and acquisition.

**Com. Stek:** The concern seems to be if the County is asking for enough with the request? What are other alternatives if another surcharge increase is not requested in the future?

**Chair Saalfeld:** If consolidation comes to fruition, the KCDA could come up with a formula and charge across the board. What is the cost savings if consolidation occurs? Fewer people, one facility instead of two. How we handle redundancy would all need to be figured out.

**Com. Stek:** Where would next generation system dollars come from?

**Undersheriff Young:** Capital fund savings on *not* paying for fire dispatch would go into Smart911, radio and CAD infrastructure.

**Com. Mast:** The voters will be very confused with this request. Someone has to lead the charge and advocate for this surcharge. Could the fire and police unions do it?

**Undersheriff Young:** There is tremendous support among the fire and police departments because of the improvements to the radio system and the stability that it would give the system. We can give information at community board meetings.

**Chair Saalfeld:** No one advocated for the jail millage.

**Com. Antor:** Main concern is relying on a third party to determine how many dollars the County will get back in this process. What do the telecommunication companies keep?

**Atty Dempsey:** Telecommunication providers keep two percent of the surcharge revenues.

**Chair Saalfeld:** Resolving the issue of collecting from telecommunication companies could take years.

**Com. Ponstein:** The State decided to upgrade its system and then mandated that counties need to upgrade their systems to work, is that true?

**Undersheriff Young:** No, the County is not mandated to join that system. The County would ask to join the State if the surcharge increase is passed. It is a better service delivery mechanism than what we have in place today.

**Com. Ponstein:** Why would the State not want the same system statewide? Counties vary with their surcharge amounts. Why not have one statewide system instead of every county having a dispatch center?

**Undersheriff Young:** It makes sense to consolidate as much as you can but there is a saturation level for each employee. You could have too few centers. You need capacity for each unit to balance equipment. Actually, it could cost more with back haul lines, and communication issues, etc.

**Com. Ponstein:** Someone who works in Kent County, but lives in another county, spends more time here but surcharge is collected by another county, is that fair? Is concerned with two millages on the November ballot and that this could sabotage the Zoo/Museum millage request. If monies are not collected until July 2017, why not put the dispatch surcharge proposal on a ballot in 2017?

**Chair Saalfeld:** Zoo/Museum advocates are not concerned. They feel both proposals stand on their own. They know there is no intent to undermine the Zoo/Museum millage request.

**Com. Bolter:** If we consolidate, what are the general steps?

**Undersheriff Young:** Would have to determine back up plan, technology issues, analyze call loading and staffing, and work through contractual issues with centers. Financially, long-term operating costs would be assessed and determine who receives the funding.

**Com. Koorndyk:** People are smart enough to know the importance of public safety. He believes that this proposal does not need to be promoted.

**Undersheriff Young:** Biggest concern is the gap in communication for first responders. Radio capacity is at risk during big events with the current radio infrastructure. The County has been very diligent making sure critical infrastructure is replaced as needed but as a system it has not been replaced in decades. Technology is so different now and it would be located in different places then where it is today.

**Com. Koorndyk:** Is confident this proposal will pass because it is important and makes sense.

**Chair Saalfeld:** Thank you for all the comments. He believes that the proposal is the right one.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

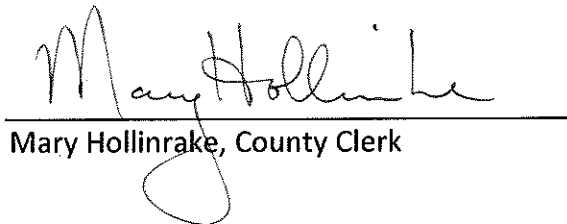
Other Business

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 a.m., Chair Saalfeld adjourned the work session.

  
James R. Saalfeld, Chair

  
Mary Hollinrake, County Clerk